Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

BUSINESS PLAN

1998 - 2001

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Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT)
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1. INTRODUCTION

Student transfer involves the portability of educational credit among programs. Based on successful completion of studies, students receive transfer credit, where appropriate, upon admission to an educational program in an Alberta post-secondary institution. The Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) serves as a body through which stakeholders work co-operatively to ensure effective transferability of courses or programs for students. ACAT operates with the support of the Minister of Advanced Education and Career Development and the co-operation of Alberta's post-secondary institutions.

2. VISION

Alberta post-secondary institutions ensure that prior learning of prospective students is appropriately recognized upon admission, thereby creating an effective and efficient student transfer system which enables learners to pursue lifelong learning opportunities.

3. MISSION

The Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer will be a catalyst for change and an advocate for adult learners in the areas of admission and transfer.

To carry out its mission, ACAT provides leadership and direction in the improvement and enlargement of educational opportunities for Alberta learners through inter-institutional transfer. This requires a commitment to improving communication among and between Alberta's post-secondary institutions, as well as stakeholders in the trades and secondary system, and to promoting the advantages of a system of education, with all that means for educational planning for the benefit of learners. To carry out its mission, ACAT:

- identifies issues and explores resolutions to these issues with stakeholders,
- advocates for learners at both a general level through its Principles and a specific level through interaction of ACAT's staff with learners, and
- communicates with stakeholders and encourages communication among stakeholders on matters regarding admissions and transfer.

ACAT operates within its Terms of Reference and should not do work that is properly that of institutions or Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development.

All individuals and groups who provide or benefit from opportunities to learn, share the responsibility for realizing the vision for student transfer in Alberta. ACAT has a key role to play through leading and working with other partners in the Alberta transfer system to expand educational opportunities for student transfer. In doing so, we recognize that:

- the Alberta post-secondary transfer system exists to serve the needs of the learner and the community.
- the Alberta post-secondary transfer system should achieve the goals and expectations established for it in consultation with Albertans.
- the Alberta post-secondary transfer system should establish standards and measure its performance.
- the Alberta post-secondary transfer system should be accountable to learners and other Albertans for results achieved.
- the Alberta post-secondary transfer system should provide information that assists Albertans in making timely and informed decisions about admissions and transfer opportunities.

4. CORE VALUES

In carrying out its mission, ACAT is guided by its Principles and pre-eminently by principle (a), which states that student access to higher education and the opportunity for student mobility among post-secondary institutions in Alberta shall be optimized. Barriers to student mobility shall be minimized. The integrity of educational programs and certification must, however, be maintained. A student should not be required to repeat previous learning experiences in which competence has been demonstrated nor should more transfer credit be granted than previous learning experiences would warrant for successful completion of the program.

5. CORE BUSINESS

ACAT's core business is to provide leadership to Alberta's post-secondary transfer system to achieve:

- increased educational opportunities for adult learners through student transfer; and
- accurate information for adult learners about admission and transfer opportunities.

ACAT's core business supports the general achievement of Advanced Education and Career Development's (AECD) goals of Accessibility, Responsiveness, Affordability, and Effectiveness and specifically links into the following objectives of AECD:

Goal: **Accessibility**: The system will encourage and support more accessible lifelong learning.
Objective: Ensure that Albertans have access to information and career consulting that allows them to make better decisions in relation to learning and work.

Goal: **Responsiveness**: The system will increase its responsiveness to the needs of the individual learner and to the social, economic and cultural needs of the province.
Objective: Ensure transferability of credentials and mobility of Albertans.

6. GOALS

There are three goals that are necessary to realize the vision and mission of ACAT:

Admission
Students will be admitted to programs on the basis of the relevance and quality of their total educational experiences.

Transfer
Students will receive appropriate educational credit when they transfer from one Alberta program to another.

Communication
Students will have access to current, accurate information on admission and transfer policies as well as course and program transfer opportunities.

7. LINKAGES TO GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA CORE BUSINESSES AND GOALS

Alberta Government

Core Businesses	Goal Statements
People..... helping people to be self-reliant, capable and caring through: • lifelong learning. • excellent schools, colleges, universities and training institutes. **Prosperity ....** promoting prosperity for Alberta through: • a dynamic environment for growth in business, industry and jobs. • a highly skilled and productive workforce. • an effective government that lives within its means. • new ideas, innovation and research. **Preservation** .... preserving the Alberta tradition of: • strong communities. • pride in Alberta and strength within Canada. • strong values and culture.	• Alberta students will excel. • Albertans will be independent. • Albertans not expected to support themselves fully will receive help. • Alberta will have a prosperous economy. • Our workforce will be skilled and productive. • Our business will capitalize on research. • Alberta will have effective and efficient infrastructure.

Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development

Core Businesses	Goals
The department's core business is to provide leadership to the adult learning system to achieve: • the creation of new knowledge essential to the development and future prosperity and preservation of Alberta and its people. • the sharing of knowledge and skills essential to the personal, social, cultural and economic well-being of individual Albertans and to the prosperity of the province. by: Supporting quality adult learning opportunities and research excellence through the provision of: • policy development and consultation. • program standard development and monitoring. • funding support. • information. Supporting adult learners in achieving their economic, social and cultural goals through the provision of: • information and consultation to access learning and work. • financial support.	**Accessibility** The system will encourage and support more accessible lifelong learning. **Responsiveness** The system will increase its responsiveness to the needs of the individual learner and to the social, economic and cultural needs of the province. **Affordability** The system will provide quality learning opportunities to the greatest number of Albertans at a reasonable cost to learner and taxpayer. **Research Excellence** The system, through its universities, will pursue research excellence to increase access to and development of new knowledge. **Effectiveness** The department will improve its effectiveness.

Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

Core Businesses	Goals
The Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer core business is to provide leadership to Alberta's post-secondary transfer system to achieve: • increased educational opportunities for adult learners through student transfer, and • accurate information for adult learners about admission and transfer opportunities.	**Admission** Students will be admitted to programs on the basis of the relevance and quality of their total educational experiences. **Transfer** Students will receive appropriate educational credit when they transfer from one Alberta program to another. **Communication** Students will have access to current, accurate information on admission and transfer policies as well as course and program transfer opportunities.

8. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The 1998-2001 Business Plan recognizes the following significant opportunities and challenges:

Transitions from High School
It is desirable that students make successful transitions from high school to post-secondary programs. This objective poses a challenge to improve articulation between the secondary and post-secondary systems. A range of pathways - Advanced Placement, Career and Technology Studies, high school College Tech Prep programs, International Baccalaureate, as well as the Registered Apprenticeship Program - are helping high school students as they develop their career plans and related educational objectives. There are opportunities to build awareness among stakeholders and to make such programs more useful by ensuring that articulation agreements gain appropriate recognition across the student transfer system.

Academic Upgrading Studies
Transitions that adult learners make from adult upgrading courses (secondary level studies) to post-secondary programs present challenges for improvement. Adult Skills Alberta is intended to provide opportunities to improve articulation with post-secondary programs so that adult learners can make a smooth transition from secondary level studies to post-secondary programs.

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition
Learners applying to programs at post-secondary institutions should have access to flexible and effective means of assessing their learning obtained in the workplace, from non-traditional providers, or from formal Continuing Education non-credit programs, so that their application for admission can be reviewed without delay, and there is no unnecessary duplication of courses, nor inappropriate loss of credit. There are opportunities for more post-secondary institutions to develop effective prior learning assessment practices and for the development of system-wide recognition of prior learning assessments.

Block Transfer Opportunities
As Albertans pursue career paths that require further learning, more block transfer agreements would provide expanded opportunities for career laddering from certificate to diploma to degree programs. At the same time, one needs to be cognizant of students who don't complete the block to ensure they don't have to repeat learning as well.

Student Advising
The formal negotiation of course transfer agreements as well as program transfer agreements has served Alberta's students well but there is a continuing challenge to improve transfer opportunities through better program advising information to prospective transfer students. Students considering transfer require access to accurate information about programs and courses they need to select for successful transfer into the chosen program.

Streamline Processes
To keep pace with the need for enlarged transfer opportunities, institutions will need to review their internal transfer credit proposal process and, where appropriate, streamline it. ACAT will review its transfer credit proposal process to ensure that it effectively and efficiently meets the needs of the student transfer system.

Transferability Performance Indicators
While ACAT has collected data on transfer, it needs to review performance indicators for the transfer system and recommend improvements, where appropriate.

Transformer Role
ACAT has the ongoing challenge to identify admission and transfer issues, act as a catalyst, and thereby transform challenges into opportunities.

9. BUSINESS PLAN GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES, ACTIONS AND EXPECTED RESULTS

GOAL: *Admission* - Students will be admitted to programs on the basis of the relevance and quality of their total educational experiences.

1998-2001 Strategies	Actions	Expected Results
Objective: Improve student transitions from secondary to post-secondary studies		
Improve articulation between secondary and post-secondary systems.	• Facilitate coming together of stakeholders. • Work with partners to build awareness of potential use of Career and Technology Studies (CTS) for admission. • Convene information workshop on CTS for post-secondary system personnel. • Meet with Tech Prep Consortium to explore system-wide acceptance of articulation agreements.	• Improved communication of high school curriculum changes to post-secondary institutions and prompt decisions on acceptance of new courses for admission. • Annual evidence that more institutional calendar statements reflect recognition of CTS learning for admission as well as advance credit or standing, where appropriate.
Collaborate to produce secondary to post-secondary student transition information.	• Continue collaboration with Alberta Education to study high school - post-secondary transitions.	• Report on transitions of the high school class of 1996-97 to identify trends.
Encourage appropriate recognition of academic upgrading courses for admission to post-secondary programs.	• Continue to work with partners through the articulation process to ensure currency and integrity of admission charts. • Expand recognition of academic upgrading courses for admission, where appropriate.	• Publish charts showing acceptance of academic upgrading courses for admission to college or technical institute programs. • Publish charts showing acceptance of academic upgrading courses for admission to university or private university college programs.
Objective: Improve service for students applying for admission		
Advocate prompt processing of applications for admission and access to course registration.	• Encourage more institutions to implement early conditional admission policies. • Encourage use of Internet applications for admission to post-secondary programs.	• Annual evidence that more programs feature early conditional admission policies for the benefit of students. • Annual evidence that more institutions offer electronic applications for admission.
Objective: Monitor application activity to identify trends		
Implement Duplicate Application Detection (DAD) project to identify trends.	• Continue to work with partners to implement the Duplicate Application Detection project. • Make DAD data compatible with analysis software currently used by institutions.	• Conduct Duplicate Application Detection study, Fall 1998 to identify trends in application activitiy. • Institutions have improved access for analysis of application activity.

Performance Indicator

Annually provide information on application activity to programs at post-secondary institutions, Fall Admissions cycle.

Source: Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer and post-secondary institutions through the Duplicate Application Detection project database.

Target: Identify trends regarding the number of learners receiving offers of admission and attending programs at post-secondary institutions for the Fall admission cycle.

GOAL: *Transfer* - Students will receive appropriate educational credit when they transfer from one Alberta program to another.

Objective: Facilitate an effective and efficient student transfer system		
1998-2001 Strategies	**Actions**	**Expected Results**
Produce system-wide principles, policies and procedures to facilitate the student transfer system.	• Continue collaboration with institutional partners to maintain and refine policy framework.	• Produce effective principles, policies and procedures to facilitate efficient operation of the student transfer system.
Monitor effectiveness of transfer system.	• Collaborate with partners to implement Transfer Patterns Study.	• Conduct the Transfer Patterns Study, Fall 1998 to identify trends in student transfer.
Ensure continuing accuracy of transfer agreements.	• Continue collaboration with institutional Contact Persons to review all transfer agreements before production of the next *Alberta Transfer Guide*.	• Annual publication of the *Alberta Transfer Guide* with accurate transfer information. • Ongoing publication of transfer information through the Online Alberta Transfer Guide.
Improve program articulation.	• Continue collaboration with stakeholders to implement program articulation process where needed.	• Publish program advising charts for prospective transfer students in selected subject areas.
Enlarge transfer opportunities.	• Encourage institutional partners to negotiate course and program transfer agreements where appropriate. • Encourage partners to develop program or block agreements that ladder from one credential to another. • Encourage efficiencies by asking institutions to review internal transfer approval processes.	• Annual evidence of number of course and program transfer opportunities for students. • Annual evidence of number of career laddering opportunities. • Ongoing review results in a more efficient transfer system.
Objective: Provide leadership for system-wide recognition of prior learning assessments		
Advocate the development of effective institutional policies and procedures for assessment of prior learning as well as system-wide recognition of prior learning assessments.	• Continue to collaborate with partners.	• Publish annual compilation of PLAR policies at selected institutions.
Build awareness of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) best practices.	• Continue to collaborate with partners. • Collaborate with institutions to refine PLAR activity reporting systems.	• Through communication, create momentum for other institutions to develop PLAR policies. • Revise Transfer Patterns Study to include information on PLAR activity.

Performance Indicators

1. **Annually provide evidence of number of opportunities for student transfer.**

Table will include information on the total number of course and program transfer agreements published in Section 3 of the annual *Alberta Transfer Guide.*

Source: Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer, transfer agreement database at publication of each edition of the *Alberta Transfer Guide.*

Target: Maintain or increase the number of transfer opportunities for students.

2. **Annually implement the Transfer Patterns Study to provide information on trends in student transfer.**

Source: Reports from institutions as requested by the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

Target: Identify trends in student mobility.

3. **Annually provide evidence of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) policies at Alberta post-secondary institutions.**

Source: Reports from post-secondary institutions as requested by the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer.

Target: Increase the number of post-secondary institutions with policies that enable students to have access to flexible and effective means of assessment of their prior learning when they apply for admission to programs at post-secondary institutions.

GOAL: ***Communication*** **- Students will have access to current, accurate information on admission and transfer policies as well as course and program transfer opportunities.**

Objective: Provide information to assist potential transfer students		
1998-2001 Strategies	**Actions**	**Expected Results**
Provide information to support students transferring to Alberta institutions so they can make informed decisions as they plan their studies.	• Continue to work with institutional partners to produce an annual compilation of all transfer agreements.	• Annually publish the *Alberta Transfer Guide* so that learners have accurate information on courses and programs that transfer as well as admission policies.
	• Continue to provide and enhance the Online Alberta Transfer Guide. • Encourage stakeholders to link their site to the Online Alberta Transfer Guide.	• Learners and advisors can access the Online Alberta Transfer Guide.
	• Link the Online Alberta Transfer Guide to the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS).	• Continue linkage to ALIS and encourage the further enhancement of ALIS so that learners can access this Internet gateway to learning and career opportunities.
	• Link the Online Alberta Transfer Guide to the Electronic Application Service.	• Using the Internet, learners can apply for admission using electronic application services.
	• Continue to provide the Transfer Infoline service.	• Learners with questions about admissions or transfer can obtain useful information.
	• Publish program advising charts for selected subject areas.	• Learners can access transfer information in selected programs.
Provide information to support Alberta students transferring to other jurisdictions.	• Distribute the *Alberta Transfer Guide* to universities, colleges, and technical institutes across Canada and selected organizations abroad. • Publicize the Online Alberta Transfer Guide beyond the province.	• Alberta students transfer to other Canadian post-secondary institutions and receive appropriate credit.
Provide information to support admission of high school students from other provinces applying to Alberta post-secondary institutions.	• Continue to produce advising charts to support admission of high school students from other provinces applying to Alberta post-secondary institutions.	• High school students who move to Alberta obtain accurate information on admission to Alberta post-secondary programs.

Performance Indicators

1. **Annually report the percentage of publicly funded post-secondary institutions with transfer agreements in the *Alberta Transfer Guide*.**

Source: Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer, transfer agreement database.

Target: 100% of publicly funded post-secondary institutions have transfer agreements in the *Alberta Transfer Guide*.

2. **Annually report the total number of institutions participating in the student transfer system by negotiating transfer agreements for publication in the *Alberta Transfer Guide*.**

Source: Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer, transfer agreement database.

Target: Ensure that institutions that should have entries in Section 3 of *the AlbertaTransfer Guide* are included in the publication.

3. **Annually provide evidence of procedures to assure accuracy of transfer information in the Transfer Guide and the Online Alberta Transfer Guide.**

Source: Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer.

Target: Maintain or improve the accuracy of transfer information.